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Questions and Answers For Potential High-Risk Areas

1-24-08

Background on the Bovine TB Eradication Project in Michigan

What is bovine TB?

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious bacterial disease that primarily affects the respiratory tract of mammals, including humans. Bovine TB is unique in Michigan because it is established in wild white-tailed deer and cattle populations in the northern Lower Peninsula.

There are three main types of TB – human, avian, and bovine. Human TB is rarely transmitted to animals; avian TB is typically restricted to birds (pigs and occasionally other animals have been found to be susceptible); and bovine TB – or cattle TB – is the most infectious, capable of infecting most mammals.

Although bovine TB was once relatively common in cattle in the U.S., it has historically been a very rare disease in wild deer. Prior to 1994, only eight previous occurrences of bovine TB in wild deer had been reported in North America.

Why is it in Michigan?

In the fall of 1994, a hunter in northeastern Lower Michigan harvested a free-ranging white-tailed deer and it was infected with bovine TB. Subsequent testing found the disease was established in the wild white-tailed deer herd and livestock testing showed some area cattle herds were also infected.

What is Michigan doing to eradicate this disease?

To cope with the task of testing and eradicating the disease from wild white-tailed deer and cattle, the Bovine TB Eradication Project was formed.

The project incorporates expertise from Michigan's departments of Agriculture, Community Health, and Natural Resources; and it partners with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, MSU Extension, researchers and laboratory personnel.

Potential High Risk Area Whole Herd TB testing

Was there a bovine TB positive deer?

There are two TB positive deer in Iosco County and one bovine TB suspect deer in Shiawassee County. The confirmatory tests take several weeks. MDA is scheduling Iosco County producers for testing and plans to *schedule* whole herd tests in Shiawassee County. If the Shiawassee deer samples come back negative, MDA will cancel the scheduled appointments.

What is a potential high risk area?

Act 466, the Animal Industry Act requires MDA to establish a “Potential High Risk Area” for whole herd TB testing in a 10-mile radius around a bovine TB positive deer.

Where was the deer found?

The deer was harvested near Owosso in Shiawassee County.

Why do I have to test?

Bovine TB can spread from TB infected deer to cattle, and vice versa. If bovine TB is established in the area, cattle herds could become infected. Additionally, Michigan’s status depends on our disease surveillance efforts. If we don’t look for disease, the status drops and MAAZ producers may lose access to markets.

How will you test?

MDA and USDA testing teams will arrive on the farm at the scheduled time.

Do I have to help?

We ask, and state law requires, that you provide reasonable assistance in making sure your herd is gathered and ready to test. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Is there a cost to me?

No, there is no cost for surveillance testing. MDA and USDA cover the cost of testing.

How many farms will be tested?

About 90 herds will be tested in Iosco County and 100 herds will be scheduled for testing in Shiawassee County.

Why now?

Because cattle, bison, and cervids are easier to gather and test before they calve/fawn and when they are not on spring pasture.

How is the DNR dealing with bovine TB in wildlife?

See the DNR Web site at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases for detailed information on the disease and the DNR’s eradication program.

What does the DNR do in a Potential High-Risk Area?

The DNR will conduct necropsies on 300 additional hunter-harvested deer and submit any suspects for laboratory testing during the 2008 archery and firearm seasons.

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